Great Western Highway Upgrade Program
Overview and strategic corridor

What is the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program?

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will deliver around 34 kilometres of four lane divided highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The program is currently in the early stages of planning; we are presenting a strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria for public consultation and the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria to Lithgow (South Bowenfels).

The NSW Government has committed $2.5 billion in funding towards the planning and delivery of the duplication.

Once the highway has been upgraded between Katoomba and Lithgow, road users will save at least 10 minutes in travel time and over 95km would be two lanes each way between Emu Plains and Wallerawang.

Separating long distance and heavy vehicles from local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists will improve road safety.

The highway will be able to support safer and more productive vehicles to help unblock the east-west choke-point going to and from the Central West and Sydney.

What has happened to date?

By 2015, the Great Western Highway had been upgraded to two lanes in each direction between Emu Plains and Katoomba. A proposed corridor for upgrade between Mount Victoria and Lithgow was reserved in 2013 and appears in the Blue Mountains City Council’s and Lithgow City Council’s Local Environmental Plans.

Since then, the NSW Government has progressively upgraded further sections of the highway, with the most recent project at Kelso opened to traffic in March 2017. In 2018, the NSW Government announced $30 million to upgrade Kelso to Raglan. The Australian and NSW Governments have spent $250 million to prioritise safety improvements along the Great Western Highway at Blackheath, Mount Victoria, and Forty Bends.
What are the benefits of the upgrade?

- Improved connection for freight, businesses, and tourism between Central West NSW and Sydney.
- Supports regional economic growth.
- Better and more reliable travel times.
- Improved road safety.
- Improved freight efficiency.
- Separate long distance and heavy vehicles from local traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Increased transport capacity to meet future growth.
What are the design constraints?

We are sensitive to the area’s natural environment, heritage, and local communities. Options for upgrading between Katoomba and Lithgow are limited by steep topography, the railway line, private property, existing towns, and the Blue Mountains National Park.

Since the current highway is a constrained space, upgrading it without using as much of the existing corridor as possible would make the program more expensive and would have a large and serious impact over the environment.

Additionally, one of the program’s key priorities is protecting and maintaining the natural environment. We understand the community treasures the natural environment and part of our detailed investigations looks to avoid environmental impact.

We will minimise impact on property and work with property owners that may become impacted by the corridor. Property owners will be consulted once they have been identified as potentially impacted.

We are still in the early stages of planning and design and your feedback is vital in shaping the design of the program. Further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments are also needed to inform the development.
Strategic corridor between Katoomba and Mount Victoria

What are the options between Katoomba and Medlow Bath?

The terrain is steep and constrained by the ridgeline, the rail line, and the Blue Mountains National Park. We are already planning for bridges between the highpoints along the ridgeline to overcome these constraints. However, we need to conduct further environmental assessments, survey work, technical studies, and community consultation to plan this section.

What are the options for Medlow Bath?

We have investigated options for Medlow Bath that aim to avoid and mitigate impacts to the Blue Mountains National Park, the village itself, businesses, including the Hydro Majestic, and the rail line, while improving road safety. However, due to the steep terrain, the location of the village, the rail line, the towns popularity for tourism and the National Park, it is not possible to bypass Medlow Bath.

From preliminary investigations, there are two options north of the village: one that crosses the rail line at the current corridor; and one that does not but could cross closer to Blackheath along Station Street.

Further environmental assessments, survey work, technical studies, and consultation with the community will be undertaken before a final option is presented.

What are the options for Blackheath?

We are sensitive to Blackheath’s environment, heritage, and local community. There are many options being considered for Blackheath and we need to consult with the community to understand views and impacts. Options to the east of the village have been ruled out as this will impact the World Heritage area. Options that run directly through the Blue Mountains National Park have also been ruled out.

We welcome and encourage feedback on how we can upgrade the highway while enhancing the village community.
Further environmental assessments, survey work, technical studies, and consultation with the community are required. From preliminary investigations we understand the following details:

- An option to duplicate the existing highway through the centre of Blackheath, could see the likely partial or full property acquisitions of some residences, businesses, open space, and potential relocation of some Blackheath Station buildings.
- An option to build an outer bypass with bridges crossing over Shipley Road, Centennial Pass, Porters Pass Track, and over the rail line at the north. Tunnels would cross the rail line at the south and under the Mountains Christian College. There are likely impacts on the existing environment through the valley but the potential to create a scenic route for locals and visitors.
- An option to build a bypass running next to the rail line either at ground level or in a cut-and-cover tunnel would start at the southern end with a tunnel underpass of the rail line, and finishing with a bridge over the rail line at the north. There would be some impacts to residential and commercial properties located along the rail line. The tunnel option provides the possibility of reusing the surface above with open space or other community purposes.
- Options to build long or short tunnels underneath Blackheath would remove traffic from the centre of Blackheath, require tunnel portals (entry and exit points) with some property and environmental impacts. Both options would require subsurface acquisition. Both options would have ventilation stacks constructed at either portal end.
What are the options between Mount Victoria and Lithgow?

In order to provide community and planning certainty the corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow was reserved in the Local Environmental Plan in 2013. This continues to be our preferred alignment and we have acquired about 23 per cent of properties along this corridor.

Once further community consultation, environmental assessments, technical studies, and survey works have occurred we will provide more information to the community and stakeholders about the proposed design for this corridor.

What will happen to parts of the Great Western Highway that are bypassed?

Where the existing highway is not upgraded as part of the program it would become a local access road.

Are routes between Katoomba to Lithgow likely to change between now and construction?

Further planning work is required, including detailed design and further technical studies, to fully assess and determine the preferred upgrade option between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. Route detail and options may change as this information is provided.

Further planning work is also required for the reserved corridor between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

We will continue to consult with stakeholders and the community throughout the development of these projects.

Are these options final?

Your feedback is needed on all aspects of the program. The upgrade has many complexities and constraints and further survey work, environmental assessment and technical studies along the highway will be needed before options are finalised. Community consultation is needed at all stages of the program.

Why is the Bells Line of Road not being upgraded?

The NSW Government continually investigates potential transport options and corridors across the state and has identified many of these within the NSW Future Transport 2056 document.

Based on transport studies and investigations, the Great Western Highway is the key corridor for transporting goods and people from the Central West to Sydney. Funding has been prioritised for the Great Western Highway to plan and deliver the upgrade of the highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

Upgrading the Bells Line of Road remains a long term option for the NSW Government.

Reserved corridor between Mount Victoria to Lithgow

This growth needs to be met with adequate infrastructure that services the region. The Great Western Highway is a key transport corridor that experiences traffic congestion and delays between Katoomba and Lithgow. The Great Western Highway is an east-west choke-point for freight as it’s the only route to Sydney that is not two lanes in each direction. The upgrade will support the region’s future population and growth in key industries including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and tourism.

Why is the Great Western Highway being upgraded between Katoomba and Lithgow?

The NSW Government has investigated ways to cross the Blue Mountains to connect the Central West region of NSW and Sydney for many years.

The Central West is NSW’s third largest regional centre and contributes 12 per cent gross regional product to the state. The region is expecting significant growth during the next 20 years with population growth of 7.6 per cent and dwellings increasing by 12 per cent.
Why is the road being upgraded instead of the rail line?
The NSW Government continually investigates potential transport options and corridors across the state.

The NSW Government has committed to duplicating the Great Western Highway between Katoomba to Lithgow to support regional growth and improve road safety.

However, as part of the 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW document, the NSW Government is investigating fast rail to better connect the Central West communities to Sydney.

Why aren’t you upgrading other sections of the Great Western Highway?
The NSW Government will continue to investigate future transport needs and investments to meet the growth within the Central West region of NSW.

The NSW Government has committed to upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba to Lithgow. Further planning would need to be undertaken to upgrade the highway beyond Wallerawang, which is outside the scope of this current program.

The NSW Government has progressively upgraded further sections of the highway, with the most recent project at Kelso opened to traffic in March 2017.

In 2018, the NSW Government announced $30 million to upgrade Kelso to Raglan. The Australian and NSW Governments have spent $250 million to prioritise safety improvements along the Great Western Highway at Blackheath, Mount Victoria, and Forty Bends.

Why is government focused on the Great Western Highway rather than other roads?
The Great Western Highway is an important route identified as part of the Land Transport Network (Roads), which has been developed through collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments. It details the road and rail routes connecting economic hubs.

Out of the four major freight connections into Sydney from the regions, the Great Western Highway is the key east-west route. However, it is the only of the four routes limited to 19m B-Double and 20m Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles. Alternate routes around the Great Dividing Range use either the Hume Highway or the Golden Highway and are up to 100km longer.

This program looks to open up access to more productive vehicles as well as improve more general access for commuters and tourists.

When will the program be completed?
Since the program’s planning and scheduling is still being refined, it is too early to confirm the date or year when this program will be completed.

How much will this project cost?
The NSW Government is investing $2.5 billion towards the program, which is sufficient for planning and early work to start and for construction of some sections.

When will construction begin and at what sections?
The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program will be delivered as a series of construction projects. Exact staging arrangements will be determined once a preferred option is decided. Early works packages for sections of the highway may also be considered. The NSW Government is committed to starting early work and construction on some sections in 2021.

How will the program be delivered?
Once a preferred option has been assessed and decided for the entire alignment, engagement will take place with the construction industry to determine how best to deliver the program.

Where is the business case for the program?
Work on the strategic business case is in early development. All major infrastructure projects like this are required to go through assurance phases and ongoing monitoring by Infrastructure NSW to ensure value for money.

What government strategies does this program align with?
The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program is aligned strategically to the following Australian and NSW Government plans, policies, and frameworks.

• NSW Future Transport 2056
• NSW Freight and Port Plan 2018-2023
• NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework
• NSW Road Safety Plan 2021
• The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
• Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan 2018
• NSW Tourism and Transport Plan 2018
• Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036
• A 20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW.
How do I talk to the program team?

We welcome the opportunity for you to talk directly to the program team. You can meet the team at a drop-in community information session, phone or email to arrange a time to speak to the program team directly, or you could leave a comment online through the collaborative map or through the feedback form that will be responded by the team or within the community feedback report.

Information sessions

We are presenting the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program for your feedback. You can comment online, contact the team, or attend an information session. No formal presentation will be given, so please feel free to drop in at any time.

- **Katoomba Street entrance (outside) to Katoomba Village Shopping Centre**, 79 Katoomba Street Katoomba
  - Tuesday 26 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm
- **Katoomba-Leura Community Centre**, 81-83 Katoomba Street Katoomba
  - Tuesday 26 November and 3 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Hydro Majestic (Delmont Room 2)**
  - Great Western Highway Medlow Bath
  - Monday 9 December – 5pm to 7pm
- **Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre** (Bates Hall), corner Gardiner Crescent and Great Western Highway Blackheath
  - Wednesday 27 November and 4 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Mount Vic Flicks, 2A Harley Avenue Mount Victoria**
  - Tuesday 10 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm
- **Hartley Hall, 2 Mid Hartley Road Hartley**
  - Wednesday 11 December – 5pm to 7pm
- **Lithgow Valley Plaza, Corner Lithgow and Bent Streets Lithgow**
  - Monday 25 November 2019 – 11am to 2pm
- **Hoskins Memorial Church Hall, 43 Bridge Street Lithgow**
  - Monday 25 November and 2 December 2019 – 5pm to 7pm

Unstaffed displays will also be available during normal business hours in the following locations.

- **Katoomba Library**
  - 30 Park Street, Katoomba
- **Lithgow Library and Learning Centre**
  - 157 Main Street, Lithgow
- **Oberon Library**
  - corner of Dart and Fleming Streets, Oberon
- **Bathurst Regional Council**
  - 158 Russell Street, Bathurst
- **Orange City Library**
  - 147 Byng Street, Orange

**Feedback closes at 5pm on Monday 16 December 2019.**